age for Bengal announced", appearing in Business Standard, Calcutta, on 11th February, 1999, regarding Eastern Coalfields Ltd., (ECL);

(b) whether the decision not to retrench any one in ECL, as reported above, has been conveyed to ECL Board;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether retrenchment with higher compensation through VRS is also not being forced on unions, as per the above decision; and

(e) *if so, the reasons therefor?*

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (e) The matter is under active consideration.

Exploitation of CBM

782. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been an acute stagnation in growth in Coal Sector for the last several years;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps proposed to activate growth in this sector, including the steps for exploiting the Coal Bed Methane (CBM), which is considered to be the fuel of the next century?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) No, Sir. Production of coal in India has increased from a level of about 70 million tonnes in the early 1970s to 297.18 million tonnes in 1997-98 (Provisional).

(b) Does not arise.

(c) India have a potential of exploitation of coal Bed Methane in its coal deposits and have delineated eight areas for its exploration and exploitation. Two more areas under process of finalisation. In addition to above, a demonstration project for Coal Bed Methane recovery and Commercial utilisation is being taken up with Global Environment Facility/United Nations Development Programme assistance with the objectives of degasifying coal seams for safer extraction of coal as well as the demonstrate economic viability of harnessing Coal Bed Methane in India.

Crisis in Singarauli Collieries

783. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whehter Government's attention has been drawn to the newsitem captioned "Singrauli" Collieries facing crises, may close mines, appearing in the 'Hindu' dated the 21st January, 1999;

(b) if so, the facts reported therein;

(c) the reaction of Government in this regard; and

(d) the steps taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) to (d) The news item published in "Hindu" dated 21st January, 1999 was about Singareni Collieries and not about Singrarauli Collieries. The Singareni Collieries are operated by Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) in Andhra Pradesh. SCCL is a joint undertaking of Government of Andhra Pradesh and Government of India sharing the equity capital of the company in 51:49 ratio. The administrative control over SCCL is however with the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

The Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL), having its headquarters in Singrauli, located in Sidhi District of Madhya Pradesh, is a subsidiary company of Coal India Limited. The coal mines operated by NCL are located in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

In the news item published in "Hindu" dated 21st January, 1999, the difficulties being faced by SCCL management on account of low off-take of SCCL coals by thermal power stations, low productivity in some of the coal mines of SCCL and the adverse effect created on the coal despatches from SCCL mines by coal imports were reported.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh have proposed that the Government of India waive outstanding interest of Rs. 663.34 crores due from Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) which had accrued during the VIII Plan period on the loans from Government of India. A restructuring package including revision of the equity-debt structure of SCCL and the request of the State Government for waiver of the outstanding interest is under consideration of the Government.

कोयले का अधिकतम उत्पादन

784. **प्रो० रामबख्श सिंह वर्मा:** क्या कोयला मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या यह सच है कि देश में कोयले का उत्पादन निर्धारित लक्ष्य से कम हो रहा है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो इसके क्या कारण हैं; और

(ग) गत दो वर्षों के दौरान कोयले का अत्यधिक उत्पादन करने हेतु सरकार द्वारा किए गए उपायों का ब्यौरा क्या है?

कोयला मंत्रालय के राज्य मंत्री (श्री दिलीप राय): (क) और (ख) 1996-97 और 1997-98 के दौरान लक्ष्य और वास्तविक उत्पादन के कंपनी वार ब्यौरे नीचे दर्शाए गए हैं:—

(मिलियन टन में)
आंकड़े अनंतिम

वर्ष	को० इ० लि०		सिं० को० कं० लि०		अन्य	
	लक्ष्य	वास्तविक	लक्ष्य	वास्तविक	लक्ष्य	वास्तविक
1996-97	252.00	250.62	30.20	28.73	6.45	6.28
1997-98	260.00	260.55	31.00	28.94	6.45	6.31

जहां को० इ० लि० ने निर्धारित उत्पादन लक्ष्य प्राप्त कर लिया है, वहां सिंगरेनी कोलियरीज कंपनी लि० सिं०को०कं०लि०) हड़तालों के कारण अपने लक्ष्य को प्राप्त नहीं कर सका।

(ग) उत्पादन लक्ष्य प्राप्त करने के लिए उठाए जा रहे कदमों में अन्य बातों के अतिरिक्त निम्न शामिल हैं:—नई खानों का खोला जाना, विद्यमान खानों आधुनिकीकरण, प्रौद्योगिकी के संवर्द्धन, आगतों और संरचनात्मक ढांचे की समय से उपलब्धता सुनिश्चित करना, उपयोगिता क्षमता को बेहतर बनाना, उत्पादकता में सुधार और अच्छे औद्योगिक संबंध बनाए रखना।

Caving in of coal mines in Bihar

785. **SHRI SHIBU SOREN:** Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item entitled, "Government still indifferent to Bihar coal mine cave-ins", published in the Indian express dated 10th February, 1999;

(b) if so, the details of cave-ins of mines in Bihar, recently;

(c) whether Government contemplate to take some urgent measures and to investigate into the matter thoroughly;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the details of the report of Director General of Mines Safety in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. In Central Coalfields Limited there had been no incidence of any subsidence in the lease hold area of Teturiakhar OC. In Bharat